Jury Is Sworn In for George Trial

By George Lardner Jr. 7/24/90
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A federal court jury was sworn in yesterday to start the Iran-contra trial of Clair E. George, the highest-ranking CIA official to be indicted in the scandal.

The seven women and five men were picked from pool of 40 questioned earlier in the week about their ability to render a fair verdict.

Their knowledge about the Iran-contra affair varied widely. One woman said she never heard of the CIA. One man expounded about the trial of former White House aide Oliver L. North, saying North "only got a slap on the wrist for a major violation of the Constitution."

Opening arguments in George's trial will begin this morning. The first witness will be Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.), a member of the Foreign Relations panel whose questioning of George at an Oct. 10, 1986, hearing figures in the indictment.

George, who was the CIA's deputy director of operations from 1984 to 1987, will stand trial on nine felony counts of lying and obstructing congressional and grand jury inquiries. The scandal involved the Reagan administration's covert military supply network for the contra rebels in Nicaragua, secret U.S. arms-for-hostages deals with Iran, and the diversion of some of those profits to the contra cause.

U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth had sealed the lengthy questionnaires the jurors filled out, but he made them public, with limited deletions, yesterday in response to a request from The Washington Post. Lamberth said he was withholding only "intensely personal information" and held that the rest should be released under Supreme Court and local appellate court standards.

The jurors, who remained anonymous until the questionnaires were made public, range in age from 25 to 72. Two are retired and all but one of the rest are employed. They work at jobs including cook, hairdresser, real estate agent and fund-raising consultant. One works at the U.S. Postal Service, one at the Transportation Department and one at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.